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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER-RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Letter dated 2 November 1995 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information prepared by the Federal Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Policy on the consequences of the sanctions in the humanitarian field (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 20.

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Annex

I. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE SANCTIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD

1. The protracted humanitarian crisis, the dismantlement of the economic system of the former Yugoslavia and the consequences of the war being waged in some of its parts, including the massive influx of refugees, have strained the social welfare system in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the extreme. Negative trends in this sphere gained particular momentum with the imposition of the international blockade, i.e., the United Nations Security Council sanctions on Yugoslavia in mid-1992. After the adoption and implementation of resolution 820 (1993) of 17 April 1993, the situation in some segments of the system became particularly disastrous and its harsh consequences will be felt for a long time to come.

II. REFUGEES AND EXPELLED PERSONS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

2. According to the estimates of the competent Yugoslav bodies, about 750,000 persons had found refuge in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by mid-October 1995. The total number of persons (refugees and expelled persons) officially registered by the Commission for Refugees of Serbia and Commission for Refugees of the Republic of Montenegro is 673,658. The estimated figure also includes those who for personal reasons did not wish to register with the competent authorities.

3. The number of refugees officially registered before mid-1995, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, was 470,188, accounting for 4.5 per cent of the total population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; now the situation has considerably changed and their percentage has risen to 6.4 per cent.

4. It should be stressed that most of the people in the first wave of refugees (95 per cent) were taken in by households, relatives, friends and people of good will, with only 5 per cent having been accommodated in collective centres. The second wave now includes more than 200,000 people and as the exodus continues and the wave keeps swelling, it is estimated that their number will reach about 250,000. These people will no longer be able to find shelter with households, except those who have relatives in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, their number being estimated at only some 20 per cent while for the others collective, longer-term and indeed permanent accommodation will have to be secured.

5. In view of the coming winter, immediate accommodation needs to be provided for an estimated 20,000 families of persons expelled from the Republic of Serb Krajina and the Republic of Srpska by the aggression of Croatia and the Croat-Muslim federation, but taking also account of the fact that quite a large number of earlier refugees will have to seek new shelter on account of the general and specifically total financial exhaustion of their host families. To provide the minimum living space required, about 30 square metres per four-member family, even with all the building facilities, which the State authorities can ensure at

the lowest construction prices, the amount required is about $600 million. This sum, which, however, does not cover the required furnishings and basic living necessities, represents an insurmountable burden given the situation in which the State and economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia find themselves.

6. Special attention must also be drawn to the fact that the total number of registered refugees and expelled persons being cared for by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia includes about 260,000 children under 18 years of age. The rest are mainly women, old people, sick and wounded people (a large number of whom were wounded when columns of people fleeing the Republic of Serb Krajina before the Croatian army were bombarded by that army) and other most vulnerable categories of the population.

III. HEALTH CARE

7. The adverse trends in evidence since 1991 have been reflected most in the provision of health care to the population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the field of health, the sanctions affect equipment, spare parts, medical supplies and inputs for the manufacture of medicaments and involve a lengthy procedure for obtaining authorization to import medicaments, so that the health care services of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are operating with a severe shortage of drugs, medical supplies, apparatuses and diagnostic means.

8. The consequences of the impossibility to extend adequate health care are felt the most in catering to the health needs of the most vulnerable population categories (pregnant women, infants, children, the elderly) as demonstrated by infant mortality rates, general mortality rates, mortality from specific diseases, the growing incidence of preventable infectious diseases and their epidemics, as well as by other negative indicators in health care.

9. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's vital statistics show that in the period 1991-1994, the above parameters changed significantly:

(a) The general population mortality rate rose from 9.8 per cent in 1991 to 10.1 per cent in 1994;

(b) The rate of live births went down from 14.6 in 1991 to 13.2 per cent in 1994.

10. As a result of the reduced number of live births and the increased number of deaths the population growth rate decreased from 4.9 per cent in 1991 to 3.1 per cent in 1994.

11. The highest mortality rate increases in the total population in the period under sanctions were registered for the following diseases:

(a) Senility without symptoms of psychosis, by 568 per cent;

(b) Hypertensive cardiac disease by 334 per cent;

(c) Chronic forms of ischaemic cardiac disease, by 212 per cent;

(d) Diabetes by 52 per cent;

(e) Chronic bronchitis by 35 per cent;

(f) Intercerebral haemorrhage by 34 per cent;

(g) The number of suicides rose by 20 per cent.

12. One can establish with certainty that the sanctions have hit the health sector hard even though they basically do not refer to the health field. None of the Security Council resolutions imposes sanctions on this area, nor have the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's resources for humanitarian purposes, specifically health needs, been frozen. Nevertheless, despite repeated submission of the Federal Government and other competent bodies, and in fact the World Health Organization (WHO) itself, the Sanctions Committee remained unresponsive to all requests, and in instances when it was compelled to respond, the authorizations procedure was much too long. Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, WHO Director-General, wrote to the Security Council in connection with inputs of the water supply system in the Republic of Montenegro, undertaking personally to oversee the utilization of these humanitarian imports, but failed to obtain a positive response. His request for sanctions to be lifted in the field of health also went unheeded.

13. This section offers only some basic and latest indicators of the effects of sanctions on the health sector in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but there are many more and they have all been repeatedly submitted to the United Nations.

IV. SOCIAL ISSUES

14. The effects of international sanctions have considerably aggravated the living conditions of not only the poor but also of a wider population. They led to a new format of poverty threatening even the social groups which have so far been spared the burden of societal stratification and impoverishment. The multiple aspects of these changes have particularly drastically reflected on the family.

15. As a result of the sanctions, it has become increasingly difficult to satisfy minimum existential needs, especially in the case of the unemployed, the employed with low income and family income below a social minimum, pensioners with low pensions and family incomes, families with children, elderly rural households, etc.

16. The number of the employed in the social sector decreased by around 620,000 (1989-1995) or 23 per cent; the number of the registered unemployed increased by around 160,000 or 26 per cent. A large number of the apparently employed - between 300,000 and 900,000 people - have been on compulsory paid leaves receiving minimum wages. The number of pensioners increased by around 400,000 or 40 per cent in this period; the ratio between the number of the employed in social sector and the number of pensioners was 2.8:1; in 1989 it was 1.5:1.

17. The drastic reduction of real public income sources, gravely affecting all benefits (salaries, pensions, disability benefits, social benefits, children's allowances, subsidies to social and children's care institutions, etc.), resulted in a steady increase of the number of citizens in a state of social need.

18. We should like to stress that the 1993 United Nations Inter-agency Mission itself establishment that the living standard of about 85 per cent of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia population had dropped to an existential minimum, and that over 50 per cent of the population required social assistance. Despite the introduced economic reform, since 1993, when the report was submitted the situation has become even worse for certain population categories.

19. The sanctions have also seriously undermined the children's health-care system, particularly adversely affecting children from poor families, children deprived of parental care and disabled children. Assistance rendered in the form of material benefits has lost value in real terms. Preschool institutions, homes for children deprived of parental care, disabled children and youth institutions for juvenile delinquents, are also in an increasingly difficult material situation, manifested by a poor quality of food and a considerable decline of standards, including poor hygienic standards, insufficient heating, inadequate maintenance, the impossibility to keep facilities and equipment in proper repair. In addition, the energetic value of nutrition of the population as a whole dropped by around 30 per cent resulting in particular in malnutrition in children.

20. The sanctions have drastically aggravated the position of women in all spheres of life. Today, Yugoslav women are forced to renounce many rights, which until recently accorded them a status that met the equality standards of civilized society. This is today primarily reflected in their unemployment rate, amounting to 17 per cent as against 12 per cent for men. In 1989 the rate for women was only 0.5 per cent higher. Women are more frequently dismissed from work. It should be especially pointed out that today women increasingly revert to housekeeping chores forced by low wages and inadequate services extended by nurseries, public utility services, kindergartens, school cafeterias, etc.

V. EFFECTS OF SANCTIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY AGREEMENTS

21. The sanctions have even affected around 60,000 beneficiaries of foreign pensions now living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and receiving annually around 250.2 million deutsche mark; around 135,000 beneficiaries of foreign insurance exercising their health-care rights in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, for whom around DM 53 million is outstanding; and 40,000 children failing to receive family allowances from competent authorities abroad (unpaid claims amounting to DM 75 million).

22. Unfortunately, to date most countries have not started remitting pensions and paying other benefits in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in spite of repeated interventions of the Federal Government with the United Nations, and

the fact that this field is definitely not included in the sanctions regime, and that these population categories are protected by a number of international legal instruments, such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, various conventions of the International Labour Organization, and especially international bilateral social security agreements (in the case of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concluded with 17 countries).

23. The countries that pay the above-mentioned benefits outside the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have brought their beneficiaries into a very difficult position and exposed them to great costs and additional hardships in view of the fact that they are basically elderly and sick persons and children.